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SCIENCE

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FRIDAY, JUNE 17, 1898.

THE VITAL EQUILIBRIUM AND THE NERVOUS SYSTEM.

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IT is noticeable that there has been a tendency on the part of our most thoughtful working biologists, especially such as are equally equipped for the philosophical and biological aspects of cellular biology, to seek some avenue of return to the vitalistic point of view. It has become sufficiently plain that the most conspicuous triumphs of histology, even in the domain of cytology, have rather reduced than increased the probability of securing an explanation of vital phenomena and specific heredity and integrity from the study of structure alone. A strong tendency is visible toward a dynamic point of view. We believe that a consistant application of a dynamic hypothesis is destined to prepare the way for greater advances, not only in interpretation, but also in practical applications of biological principles. When we come to regard the visible structural data of histology as expressions of dynamic processes rather than the causes of these processes, and when we have agreed to apply other criteria than that offered by materialism to the phenomena of heredity, we may be able to shake ourselves free of preconceptions that have done much to retard the normal development of both biology and psychology. It is true that a strong prejudice exists against the dynamic method because of the belief that it tends to limit research and